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Colorado's Basin Roundtables - Perspectives From Around the State

Bradley Kloewer

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to meet each basin's nonconsumptive needs. Bassi referred to this compilation as the "Nonconsumptive Toolbox." One tool that the CWCB is employing is the Nonconsumptive Gap Analysis, which will help the BRTs identify gaps in the protection of environmental and recreational attributes by illuminating which areas in a given basin are at risk. Bassi also explained that the Nonconsumptive Gap Analysis organizes existing protection measures for environmental and recreational areas into quantifiable data sets, which encourages the BRTs to identify long-term goals and outcomes for those areas.

Overall, Mitchell, Kowalski, and Bassi provided a helpful overview of the CWCB's approach to the Colorado Plan. All three speakers stressed the importance of allowing Coloradoans to have a voice in the Colorado Plan—whether through the BRT's or by contacting the CWCB directly. It may be unclear what the next chapter of Colorado water planning will be, but whatever it is, each speaker on the panel was confident that the Colorado Plan would certainly play an important role.

Matt Freemann

COLORADO'S BASIN ROUNDTABLES - PERSPECTIVES FROM AROUND THE STATE

The University of Denver Water Law Review held its Seventh Annual Symposium on April 18. The title of the second panel of the morning was "Colorado's Basin Roundtables - Perspectives from Around the State." Star Waring, natural resources and water law attorney at Dietz & Davis, P.C. and adjunct professor of water law at the University of Denver Sturm College of Law, moderated the four-person panel. The discussion focused on the importance of open communication and mutual understanding between representatives from each of Colorado's nine basin roundtables. The panelists included Marc Waage, Denver City and County Representative for the Metro Basin Roundtable; Gary Barber, Chair of the Arkansas Basin Roundtable; Ken Neubecker, Environmental Representative of the Colorado Basin Roundtable; and Sean Cronin, Chair of the South Platte Basin Roundtable. The four panelists presented a range of perspectives that highlighted the diversity of concerns for Colorado's various water interests, as well as the importance of working together to find common solutions.

Marc Waage, Denver City and County Representative for the Metro Basin Roundtable, began his comments by making light of the often-adversarial position occupied by the urban districts in water planning discussions. As the home to the majority of Colorado's populace, urban districts will inevitably make demands on the state's water resources that the more agricultural regions are prone to protest. However, Waage pointed out, this opposition can be reframed in a more productive manner to achieve a healthy mutual understanding. Urban areas are responsible for the overwhelming majority of the state's economy and inevitably facilitate opportunities for the other regions. Furthermore, agriculture is responsible for 85% of the state's water consumption, but only 5% of the state's economy; indicating that urban and industrial regions are comparatively more efficient with their water use. Nonetheless, Waage highlighted the importance of working with the other

roundtables and noted a number of particular areas where he believes improvements in efficiency can and should be made: 1) joint planning regarding land and water use 2) requirements for water efficient plumbing fixtures 3) redevelopment of urban areas with a focus on water efficiency, and 4) development of new sources of supply from the western slope.

Gary Barber, Chair of the Arkansas Basin Roundtable, focused his initial comments on the history of the roundtable discussions and the value they present to statewide water planning efforts. Barber emphasized the extremely diverse interests of the various roundtables, but pointed out a common interest in a viable future is a shared goal for all participants. The most pressing problem for the Arkansas Basin Roundtable is determining alternatives to a 30% reduction in agricultural land required to meet the municipal gap. A 25,000-30,000 acre foot gap already exists, which has stressed the necessity for agricultural water reduction. This reduction is naturally unpopular for the agricultural regions, which have responded by pursuing three avenues to establish viable alternatives: 1) technical studies, 2) policy studies, and 3) pilot projects. Barber suggested that the emphasis for his roundtable is the importance of increasing storage capacity, maximum utilization of existing water, the need to frame the dialogue in economic terms, and the significance of collaborative solutions.

Ken Neubecker, Environmental Representative for the Colorado Basin Roundtable, had a markedly different set of concerns. As the only representative from the western slope, Neubecker stressed the importance of having an ecological perspective when forming engineering plans. Water plays an incredibly important role in sustaining life, and he argued that we must be careful not to view it merely as a commodity. He focused on the notable absence of reasonable allocations for "non-consumptive" use in current water plans, but contested the use of this term as often misplaced and inaccurate. Neubecker suggested that Colorado should place more focus on supplying an appropriate amount of financial resources to address how we might sustain a flourishing environment as well as a flourishing economy, and the need to develop appropriate modeling technology to address these concerns.

Sean Cronin, Chair of the South Platte Basin Roundtable, shared a number of observations from his experience. He highlighted the central importance of planning ahead and working together, and he applauded the roundtables for facilitating this essential interaction. Last year's floods plainly illustrated the need for forward-looking planning, as well as the reality that environmental concerns become an afterthought in times of emergency. The South Platte Roundtable is unique in the diversity of its concerns, requiring substantial amounts of urban, industrial, and agricultural use. Current growth rates suggest that this basin will continue to experience shortages. Thus, the importance of conservation is paramount, as is the need to develop new supplies, most likely from the western slope.

Despite the unique perspectives and interests of each of the panelists, all agreed that open communication and consistent dialogue are essential if we hope to secure a comfortable and living future for all Coloradans.

Bradley Kloewer